

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
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R 022020Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7902
INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA
USICA WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

UNCLAS SAN SALVADOR 2112

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR PN ES
SUBJ: FURTHER REACTION TO U.S. SENATE VOTE ON PANAMA CANAL TREATY

REF: (A) SAN SALVADOR 1933, (B) SAN SALVADOR 1903

1. EDITORIAL REACTION TO THE U.S. SENATE VOTE APPROVING THE SECOND PANAMA CANAL TREATY CONTINUED TO APPEAR. THE APRIL 20 EDITION OF THE MEDIUM-CIRCULATION, PRO-GOVERNMENT "DIARIO LATINO" PRAISED PRESIDENT CARTER'S EFFORTS TO GET THE TREATY APPROVED. THE APRIL 21 EDITION OF THE BUSINESS-ORIENTED "REPORTE ECONOMICO" PRAISED THE U.S. SENATE AND PARTICULARLY PRESIDENT CARTER FOR THE VOTE, CALLED THE ACTION "A TRIUMPH FOR LATIN AMERICA, WHICH SEES THE CANAL AS A SYMBOL OF ITS ASPIRATIONS." IN AN EDITORIAL IN ITS APRIL 24 EDITION, THE CONSERVATIVE "EL DIARIO DE HOY" COMMENTED THAT "THE HISTORIC DECISION NOT ONLY OPENS A NEW CHAPTER IN THE RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES WITH LATIN AMERICA BUT ALSO REAFFIRMS FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR PEACEFUL RELATIONS AMONG NATIONS." IN ITS APRIL 25 EDITION, "EL DIARIO" STATED THAT WHILE IN PROVIDING FOR THE EVENTUAL TRANSFER OF THE CANAL "THE UNITED STATES HAS RECOGNIZED THE

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SOVEREIGN RIGHT OF OUR COUNTRIES TO DIRECT THEIR OWN DESTINIES", THE TREATY ALSO IMPOSES OBLIGATIONS ON PANAMA TO OTHER NATIONS WITH RESPECT TO OPERATION OF THE CANAL.

2. IN AN EDITORIAL IN ITS APRIL 25 EDITION, "DAIRIO LATINO" CRITICIZED GENERAL OMAR TORRIJOS' COMMENTS AFTER

THE U.S. SENATE VOTE, ESPECIALLY HIS COMMENT THAT IN THE EVENT OF A NEGATIVE VOTE, PANAMA HAD THE CAPABILITY TO DESTROY THE CANAL DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF U.S. TROOPS, CALLING IT "BRAVADO WITHOUT SENSE". THE EDITORIAL GOES ON TO STATE THAT SUCH "RHETORICAL FLOURISHES" BY TORRIJOS INDICATE "POLITICAL IMMATURITY" ON HIS PART.

3. OTHER REACTION TO THE U.S. SENATE VOTE HAS EITHER BEEN MUTED OR NON-EXISTENT. ONE CLERGYMAN, PROMINENT IN BOTH CHURCH AND UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS, TOLD CAO THAT THE VOTE WAS A POSITIVE STEP, ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED BEING DISAPPOINTED THAT CANAL WOULD NOT BE TURNED OVER TO PANAMA UNTIL THE YEAR 2000. ONE LABOR LEADER, WHEN ASKED HIS REACTION, MERELY REFERRED TO AN EARLIER PAPER CIRCULATED BY HIS CONFEDERATION BEFORE THE SENATE VOTE, CRITICIZING "REACTIONARY ELEMENTS" WITHIN THE U.S. SENATE.
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